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Synopses of Important Articles.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PSALTER. By REV. JOHN P. PETERS, in *The New World*, June, 1893, pp. 203-311.

The latest work in the criticism of the Psalms by Professor Cheyne is radical and based upon wrong critical methods. His work disregards the data furnished by the Psalter itself in the form of external arrangement, quotations, and references. It depends entirely upon subjective criteria and is based largely upon conjecture. It is a universal principle in the history of hymns and songs that they change and grow from age to age. Such changes and growth are to be found in the Psalms: (1) Insertions are found to have been made in Psalms 9 and 10, originally an alphabetic acrostic, every second verse commencing with a different letter in the order of the alphabet. Psalm 44 furnishes an example of the addition of a dirge of lamentation to a joyful hymn; Psalms 3, 46, 80 have grown in the same way. (2) Longer hymns appear developed from an ancient shorter formula as a theme or motive. Here belongs Psalm 68. Refrains are frequently added, as in Psalms 42, 46. (3) A hymn book must represent the popular side of religion, and must not be treated as though it represented the spiritual leaders. The latter may be far in advance of the people; and the popular belief may be entirely inconsistent. "People will profess orthodoxy in their creeds and sing heresy in favorite hymns with the most naïve unconsciousness of inconsistency between them." (4) The Psalms are poetry and must be treated as poetry. In seeking for the historical settings, one may overlook this fact.

The following are the stages of growth in the Psalter: (1) First collection, Psalms 3-41, to which were prefixed later Psalms 1 and 2. (2) Three Elohist selections, the Psalter of the sons of Korah, 42-49, the Psalter of Asaph, 50, 73-83, the Prayers of David, the son of Jesse, 51-72. (3) The re-editing of these collections by Jehovistic editors with the addition of Psalms 84-89. (4) The division of this collection into two books after Psalm 72, thus making three books in all. (5) The addition of a fourth book, 90-150. (6) The division of the fourth book into two after the fashion of the Pentateuch.

By study of the headings, the Psalms repeated in different portions of the Psalter, it is clear that the first three books of the Psalter, as a whole, had been collected and edited a considerable time before the editing of the collections of the last two books.

From a study of 1 Chronicles 16: 8-36, it is clear that the fourth book had been arranged as early as 330 B. C. At the same time the fifth book was

in existence, or at least a portion of it. Psalms 138-144 were added to what in 330 B. C. was a complete book in the time of the Antiochian oppression. Psalms 145-150 were added in the time of the Maccabean triumph. It is safe to say that Psalms 90-134 had been arranged at some time between 400 and 350 B. C. To a much earlier period, however, we must assign books 2 and 3, and Psalms 42-89.

Of the three collections composing these books, 84-89 may be assigned to a date between 500 and 450 B. C. They represent a period of distress and humiliation. They are also evidently post-exilic,—the feeling is the same as that found in Ezra, Nehemiah, and the post-exilic prophets. The other three collections had in each case been collected separately as early as 500 to 450 B. C.

The first book as a collection is not earlier than the exile, as is seen from the Psalms in it which indicate exilic conditions. There are in it also very late legal elements, but the greater part of the book is pre-exilic. It contains the "most forceful poems of the Psalter and those containing the most primitive pictures of nature." There must be assigned to David an important part in the development not only of secular but also of religious lyrical poetry. At the same time, it is probable that the Davidic Psalms have been so edited, adapted, added to, and subtracted from that it is difficult to identify the original work. The form and content of Babylonian psalmody suggest an earlier age for the beginning of Hebrew psalmody. The prophets show evidence of an acquaintance with lyrical religious poetry which has been largely under-estimated.

The order of development thus suggested is attested (1) by a study of the general tone, as joyful or triumphant, or as indicating distress and calamity; (2) by an analysis of references to sacrifice or matters relating to sacrifice; (3) by an analysis of the mythological references; (4) by the history of the doctrine of the future life.

The criticism of Professor Cheyne's views, which constantly appears in this treatment must be regarded as well-founded. The principles upon which the present treatment is worked are surely well established principles. The general outline indicated in the article is extremely satisfactory, although the details in some cases, for example Psalm 42, rest largely upon conjecture. The article is thoroughly good in its tone and full of suggestion. It is to be hoped that the author will be able to give us in full form the ideas here expressed.

W. R. H.